

United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Wildlife Services Directive

WS 4.185
3/27/2023

WS UNIFORM POLICY

1. PURPOSE

In accordance with Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) policy on uniforms, this Directive sets requirements for establishing uniform allowances and wearing guidelines for Wildlife Services' (WS) personnel.

2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This Directive replaces WS Directive 4.185, Uniform Standards and Guidelines, dated, December 11, 2012.

3. AUTHORITY

Authorities regulating uniform allowances and the payment of such allowances:

- a. 5 U.S.C. 5901-5902, as amended, The Federal Employees Uniform Allowance Act
- b. 5 C.F.R. 591, Subpart A - Uniform Allowances
- c. USDA Procurement Advisory No. 101B
- d. MRP Directive 4591.1, Uniform Policy

Uniform allowances are dependent upon the approval of the annual Appropriations Bill, or a continuing resolution as enacted by Congress or cooperative funding.

4. BACKGROUND

The determination of using federal funds to purchase wearing apparel is based on the principle that every government employee is required to present themselves for official duty in proper attire according to the requirements of their position. Wearing apparel is the personal responsibility of the employee, but there are certain items, required by the nature of the job, which the government should furnish. If, under these limited circumstances, a clothing item is required, then an exception is allowed for items designated as uniforms or protective clothing, provided these items meet certain specific and strict requirements. The three basic types of wearing apparel are: ordinary wearing apparel/normal business work attire; protective clothing and equipment; and uniforms (MRP Directive 4591.1).

5. POLICY

- a. When uniforms are required for the performance of official duties WS will provide allowances for personnel to buy or replace uniforms.

- b. Supervisors must determine which positions require uniforms and define the uniform component types and quantity allowed for that position.
- c. WS personnel who may be required to wear uniforms to perform official duties include those:
 - (1.) Involved in wildlife management field work;
 - (2.) Involved in emergency deployments or projects; and
 - (3.) As determined by supervisors, who are in contact with the public and require identification via a uniform while performing official duties.
- d. Supervisors must determine the annual uniform allowance amount before establishing the open timeframe to order uniforms.
- e. Uniform allowance must not *exceed* the current USDA authorizing amount of \$800 per fiscal year, per employee. It is not anticipated or required that every employee who must wear a uniform will receive the maximum program or Department rate. (With Congressional approval, the annual uniform allowance can change, updates will appear under 5 C.F.R. 591 Subpart A.)
- f. The annual uniform allowance period is by fiscal year. Any unused uniform allowance balance must not carry over from one fiscal year to the next.
- g. Personnel who may require uniform items for occasional outreach, stakeholder interactions, site visits, and other special projects, are not entitled to an annual uniform allowance.
- h. Personnel must notify their supervisor of circumstances potentially requiring changes to uniform allowances.
- i. Uniform annual allowances must be tracked by their respective program and/or employee.
- j. WS must use the established Departmentwide contract with the approved vendor for all uniform purchases. WS programs must use the established vendor website to complete transactions using government purchase cards (GPC).
- k. WS must not:
 - (1.) Establish separate contracts for uniform purchases;
 - (2.) Provide reimbursement (i.e., SF-1164 process) of uniform expenses;
 - (3.) Purchase ordinary wearing apparel/normal business work attire; or
 - (4.) Provide footwear as a uniform component.

6. WAIVER PROCESS

- a. Any actions that deviate from uniform allowances or use of the approved vendor must submit a waiver to the WS Uniform Committee. Any employee deviations without a waiver can result in sanctions.
- b. Individual waivers are an option when:
 - (1.) Employee's size isn't offered by the approved vendor;
 - (2.) Employee experiences qualifying events (e.g., maternity); and
 - (3.) Personnel are working with other agencies or programs that have additional uniform requirements (i.e., personnel on TDY on military installations overseas, emergency response deployments, etc.).
- c. Uniform waiver request forms can be obtained from the WS Uniform Committee. Waiver requests must be approved by the employee's supervisor and WS Uniform Committee. The Uniform Committee will have up to 14 days to review the request. Upon Committee approval the employee or program may purchase the requested items from the proposed alternative vendor using a GPC.
- d. All items purchased through a waiver process must be similar in style to uniform items in the current uniform offering. Tops and/or outerwear must follow the Department's Visual Standards Guide, including the proper display of the USDA symbol. If applicable, uniform items will be sent to the approved uniform vendor for application of the USDA symbol.
- e. A copy of the receipt must be sent to the Committee in order to update the vendor's employee uniform allowance.

7. WEARING GUIDELINES

- a. Personnel must only wear uniforms while on official duty.
- b. Personnel must pay for uniforms to be altered, laundered, dry cleaned, and repaired.
- c. Personnel must wear a uniform shirt when uniforms are considered mandatory. Unless specifically required by their supervisor, other uniform items (i.e., pants, hats, belts, etc.) may be offered but are considered optional.
- d. Outerwear with an official USDA symbol must be approved uniform outerwear. Outerwear that is considered PPE (cold weather gear, rain gear, flame retardant, high-visibility vests/jackets, etc.) is not considered uniform components and can be purchased following PPE guidelines and worn without an official USDA symbol. If an official USDA symbol is desired on PPE outerwear, items will be sent to the approved uniform vendor for application.
- e. To maintain the professional image of WS, personnel are responsible to ensure that uniforms are properly worn and replaced as necessary.

- f. Supervisors will determine if shorts are an allowable uniform component. Walking shorts may be altered not more than 2 inches above the knee.
- g. Uniforms and ordinary wearing apparel must be neat, clean, and in good repair at the start of duty.
- h. Personnel must notify their supervisor when uniforms are no longer needed (i.e., retirement, new job, separation, and/or transfer). Supervisors may request all uniform apparel to return. The supervisor must deactivate the uniform account and ensure proper retention and disposal of uniforms. During the employee's off-boarding process, returned uniforms will be documented on the APHIS Form 40, Employee Exit Inventory.
- i. Personnel who fail to follow uniform guidelines, use uniform items improperly, or misuse uniform allowances, will be verbally counseled by their supervisor and may be subject to additional disciplinary actions.
- j. This Directive does not prohibit employees from wearing appropriate non-uniform components (ordinary wearing apparel, normal business attire, PPE, etc.).

8. DEFINITIONS

- a. Ordinary Wearing Apparel/Normal Business Work Attire: Normal business or work attire purchased at the discretion of the employee which may include clothing, attire, inner and outer garments, or garb. Agencies cannot use government funds to purchase apparel.
- b. Protective Clothing and Equipment: Clothing or equipment required for employee safety and is considered either special clothing and equipment (SC&E) or personal protective equipment (PPE). This may include items to protect eyes, face, head, and extremities, protective clothing, respiratory devices, and protective shields and barrier between the individuals and a hazard that could result in an injury or occupational illness. Items of PPE must only be authorized after a "job hazard analysis" (JHA) has been completed specifically identifying the items as required mitigation to address a workplace hazard. To be authorized as SC&E, three conditions must be met:
 - (1.) The item must be "special" and not part of the ordinary and usual furnishings an employee may reasonably be expected to provide for themselves;
 - (2.) The item must be for the benefit of the Government; that is, essential to the safe and successful accomplishment of the work, and not solely for the protection of the employee; and
 - (3.) The item has been recommended as PPE or SC&E after a job hazard analysis has been completed, identifying potential hazards.

An appropriate JHA can be developed or obtained either from a supervisor, the WS Safety and Health Manager, or from the cooperator which requires specific PPE to be worn by those who work on their site. Several JHAs have already been

developed by the WS Safety and Health Manager and can be found on the WS Intranet.

- c. **Uniform:** A specified article or articles of clothing an employee is required by the Mission Area to wear to provide a distinctive and easily identifiable appearance in performing his/her job. A “uniform” does not include protective equipment required for the employee’s safety under 5 U.S.C. 7903, or normal business or work attire purchased at the discretion of the employee. To be considered a uniform, three conditions must be met:
- (1.) The clothing item(s) must be specified;
 - (2.) Employees must be required to wear the uniform (not optional); and
 - (3.) The sole purpose of the apparel is to provide employees a distinctive and easily identifiable appearance.

10. SCOPE

This Directive is applicable to all WS personnel, official volunteers, contractors, and collaborators utilizing uniforms. This Directive does not apply to PPE or other safety items.

11. INQUIRIES

Contact:
WS Uniform Committee SharePoint or
APHISWSUniformCommittee@usda.gov

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